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AUTHOR	Mack-Ernsdorff, Cindi
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ABSTRACT

This article argues that all cultures, and thus all families, operate, possibly even evolve, from out of the stories we are told while we are young. Adding to this idea the realization that all stories evolve from out of our cultures, the article suggests societies are shaped by the circularity and interaction of this combination. It focuses on the relation between story and tolerance. The article uses A. A. Milne's "Winnie the Pooh," as a metaphor to (1) explain the internal structure of a 'multi-differentiated' family and community and (2) illustrate the idea that through the familial and cultural use of stories, we set up boundaries, expectations, belief systems, behaviors, rules and norms and establish levels of tolerance that explain and humanize the effect of differences that are found within our social groupings. The research methodology combines literary exploration and individual interviews (a family social worker specializing in U.S. subcultures; a married mother of four; one male and one female child of 'story book ages'). This article includes a bibliography and a list of interviews. (BB)

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"Once Upon a Time, a Very Long Time Ago Now, About Last Friday..." (Pooh Bear).

by Cindi Mack-Ernsdorff

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"We should indeed try to discriminate between history and myth; but true or false, the stories that we share provide us with our values, goals, and traditions. The tales we tell our children define what kind of people we shall be." (Ed Hirsch, Jr., et al)

<u>Tolerate:</u> 1) to allow without prohibiting or opposing; permit. 2) To recognize and respect (the rights, beliefs, or practices of others). (The American heritage College Dic.tion.ar.y; 1993)

"Once Upon a Time, A Very Long Time Ago Now, ...About Last Friday.

Introduction:

In this article I will show that *all* cultures, and thus all *families* operate, possibly even *evolve* from out of the stories that we are told while we are young. Just as conversely, though, is the realization that all *stories* evolve from out of our *cultures*. Ultimately, it is the combination of these two that shape us and the society that we live in. To understand how a culture defines "tolerance," one has but to go to the stories that are told to their young. Thus, a form of "human permission," if you will, has its beginnings in the *stories* that are told *within* the cultures themselves. Without one or the other, neither *one* of these would exist; but then, who would *want* them to? Although this is easy to understand when families operate within the *same* culture, but this concept is still just as true for families that are made up of *multiple* and *diverse* cultures as well. Through the familial and cultural use of stories, we set up boundaries, expectations, belief systems, behaviors, rules, and norms *and establish levels of tolerance* that explain and *humanize* the effect of differences that are found within our social groupings. The theorist Jung argues that even some *religious* ideas and ideology emerges from out of our story's profiles With little discussion involved, it would be easy to say that the standards that society operates from have been "storied" into the very *heart* of our understandings of the world, and most definitely effects our tolerance levels.

Using a very common – but not to say "*ordinary*" – accepted child's story from out of *our* society, that of A. A. Milne's *"Winnie the Pooh,"* I will explain the internal structure of not just *any* family, but rather a *multi-differentiated* family and community to illustrate the point that I have made. With the help of a privately conducted research that combines both literary exploration and individual interviews from a single male, who is also a family social worker working within the sub-cultures of America, a female and married mother of four children, as well as both a male and a female child of approximately "story book ages," [1] it is my hope that the following analogy will afford an understanding of the characters that reside within the *100-Acre Wood* (which just *happens* to be the home of Pooh Bear's community and family). Hopefully, through the use of such an analogy, a new level of tolerance can be explored by the reader. I, the author of this paper, will play in the role of a writer and an ethnographer; one who has conducted research while living in the midst of this 'band' of animals. As the fictitious anthropologist, I will point out certain, reliable facts that will help to make the culture in this story more recognizable, ultimately using this analogy to both explore and to *prove* my argument about the importance that our story's perspectives play culturally for teaching tolerance to our young.

While the argument in this paper might inevitably *convince* the reader of its validity, suggesting a certain level of credibility through the examples that are presented, there is an *unfortunate* consequence that results from its "telling." Sadly, by explaining the nature and diagnosis of the characters from the story of *"Winnie the Pooh,"* the characters of the Pooh stories might never be seen in *quite* the same light that they were *before* the reader's examination of this report. For this, I, the author of this paper, wish to say that I am *truly* sorry.

-- And now, let us begin our story from the beginning...

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[1] Story book ages is any age young enough to still tolerate fairy tales, and that loves them for what they were constructed to be; entertainment and pleasure, enhanced only by the wisdom of the elders!

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Please, it is my *pleasure* to introduce *Pooh Bear*, ...And his family of *'Created Kin-folk.'*

Pooh's family, who reside in the 100 Acre Wood area, is a cross-cultured, multi-ethnic, multi-*differentiated* family made up of creative kinships. It is village structured, and it is horticulturally based. Since none of the members of this band are married, it is unclear whether it is a monogamous, polyandrous, or polygamous based community.

Although somewhat co-dependant, Kanga, a single mother of one, and resides at the edge of the 'Wood,' appears to be the only mother-figure for *all* of the residents of this multi-ethnic, multi-differentiated community. I would have to say that this would suggest that this band is matrilineal and matrilocal. Kanga is the one, as mothers do, who sets certain standards for the band, such as "I told you yesterday about making faces; if you go on making faces like Piglet, you will grow up to *look* like Piglet – and *then* think about how sorry you will be. Now then, into the bath, and don't let me have to speak to you about it again" (Millen, "*Winnie the Pooh.*" P105).

The absolute gender does not seem to be defined for *any* of the individual members of this community, [as is evidence in even Winnie the Pooh Bear's *real* name, for truly, Pooh Bear's name is "...Winnie-ther-Pooh. [After all,] Don't you know what *'ther'* means?" (Milne, *"World of Pooh."* p7) It is hard to define the compartmentalized or designated roles or jobs within this village. The only two exceptions to this statement could be the job that is held by Rabbit, who operates as the Chief Horticulturist for the band, and, of course Kanga, who is the sub-chief, or, the "mother role", as I have mentioned before. There is a strong component of family alliance, but the attitudes and expectations for childrena are beyond the scope of this paper, for there *are* no *actual* children within this particular band. One would assume, however, based upon my *personal* knowledge and the *actual stories and traditions* that I have both heard and *observed* during my time with the Pooh clan, that there would be very *few* expectations of or for children. In fact, I would fell safe to assume that children – if there should there ever *be* any in this family – would be *deeply* appreciated for their innocence and for their level of acceptance for differences. The only expectation that I would have or imagine that this band *might* apply is that children would be expected to both look and *behave* like *children*. I believe, even though there are no children withinthe 100-Acre Wood areas, that this is *not* due to the fact that children are not desired. In *fact*, I suspect that children are not only deeply *loved* by this clan, but that they are also deeply *treasured* as well!

The tribe seems to have been formed out of a 'disability attatchment identification factor[2],' such as one that a professional might find in DSM-IV (Disney Story Manual, number four[3]) rather than from the usual bloodline or generationally-based formulas. Traditions and cultures are formed out of a community consensus and acceptance (or habit) forum, rather than to any long-termed commitment to a particular belief system. Their modus operandi for recording history is via both traditional story telling, as well as in the written form.

As I have stated earlier, this band is bonded via a disability attatchment identification element. The majority of these afflications – if one would choose to call them as such – seem to be either neurological or emotionally based. All of the members of this band appear to have been shunned by both their biological families and the dominant culture-at-large that exists outside of the *100 Acre Wood* arena. In addition to the several *enrolled* members of this band, there are a number of *un*enrolled members as well. The Woods area has, at their service, two public assistants, or "helpers" that regularly visit the members of the village. One, Owl, is an educationally-based character, while the other, by the name of Christopher Robin, operates in the capacity of an in-home counselor, and operates from out of the mental-health domain.

Although the ages of the band members are not available for review, it appears that this is not a significant factor within this group. It appears that most of this village's members share a commonality of

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[2] This is an attachment that is formed due to the relativity of living with a disability. Although the disability itself might differ from another's, the fact that society levels a certain stigmatation upon *all* people living with a disability creates a form of "bonding" between those who live life's that are complicated with *any* disability.

[3] Although a fictional book title, obviously, it is a title that could *well* represent any of Mr. Disney's *many* known and lovable characters.

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living, as each of them appears to live with the *"Tuck Everlasting*[4]*"* syndrome. Thus, rather than living with a hierarchy that is developed out of seniority, this group appears to rank themselves with the "community and commonly effective" rule. Their system operates with a deep commitment to acceptance, and is strengthened by an air of 'non-judgmentalism.' Whereas there does not appear to be any signs of nutritional deficits among this tribe, there *does* seem to be an almost mythical attachment to honey, and, in the case of Rabbit, to vegetables as well.

It appears that this unique community of individuals is generally well loved by the dominant culture, yet the band seems to be kept *isolated*, still, from the norm. This could be relative to the very things that bind them together as a tribe and that helps them to create their family ties. It could also be diametrically related to both their cultures and to their disabilities in whole. Of the seven enrolled members of the tribe, the only *one* exception to the disability rule is Kanga, who, as I have established earlier, is learning to establish more defined boundaries for herself and her family/friends, due to her own do-dependant issues, and is successfully learning to deal with this learning disability as a result. Still, Kanga's diagnosis is outside of the usual band member's diagnosis.

Out of the remainder band members, there are several who live with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or Effects (FAS/E), Fetal Drug Effects (FDE), and/or Attention Deficit Hyper-Activity (ADHD), Attention Deficit *without* Hyper-Activity (ADD). One member of the tribe – who the Pooh family told me that "Tigger's [the] name, and bouncing is [Tigger's] game" (Milne, *"World of Pooh."* p217) suffers with F.A.S., F.D.E., *and* A.D.H.D. It is suspected that Tigger was abandoned by biological mom. Apparently, Tigger's mother both drank alcohol *and* used crack-cocaine *heavily* during the pregnancy that ultimately produced Tigger. Although Tigger is *physically* attractive and *is extremely* charismatic, Tigger still seems to be only surfacely attached to the others in the band. This could be due to Tigger's short-term memory deficit, or it could have derived from the fact that Tigger lives with an extreme lack of understanding of cause-and-effect.

Pooh Bear can be seen as a classic example of a character that lives life with F.A.S. Pooh's I.Q. appears to be *quite* low in comparison to the other village members. Pooh explains that this is because Pooh's head is "stuffed full of fluff," and states that "*Some have brains, and some haven't. And there it is*" (Milne, *"Winnie the Pooh."* Intro.). It appears that Pooh Bear is also developmentally delayed to a much younger age than what Pooh's expected chronological age might be. Pooh is dysmorphically micro-cephalic, slightly overweight, particularly A.D.D., yet still very charismatic and lovable. Piglet, another member of the band, is *also* F.A.S, but seems to suffer more of the *physical* effects of this syndrome rather than the expected *mental* deficiencies. Piglet's intellectual domain is more intact when he is compared to Pooh Bear, but Piglet, at first sight, seems to live with some sort of nutritional deficiency. Piglet is smaller than the norm, which could be said to be typical of the syndrome that young Piglet lives with. Says a friend, "Piglet is so small that he slips into a pocket, where it is very comfortable to feel him when you are not quite sure whether twice seven is eleven or twenty two" (Milne, *"Winnie the Pooh."* Intro.). Piglet is also sensory integration disordered. Every change seems to bring about some form of emotional trauma or dread, and, as a result, Piglet seems to endure the effects of low self-esteem as well. Says Piglet of himself, "Its hard to be brave when you are a Very Small Animal"...(Milne, "*Winnie the Pooh."* p94).

Rabbit lives with a compulsive-obsessive disorder, and is a suspected victim of not only abandonment, but also of multiple moves. As a result, Rabbitt's commitment to the band appears to be more-or-less conditional, and an attachment disorder could be assumed. Rabbit tends to isolate and has recently been referred to the local anger management group via his counselor, the esteemed Christopher Robin.

Eyeore is *clearly* Post Traumatic Stress Disordered (P.T.S.D.), possibly relative to a traumatic childhood that might well have included both physical abuse and abandonment issues during Eyore's formative years. For example; Eyore says, in response to a question of "How are you?" that he is "Not very how. I haven't felt *at all* how for a long time" (Milne, *"Winnie the Pooh."* p45). This could point to dysthymic depression, as Eyeore's comment could suggest a rather long-termed sense of helplessness and hopelessness. Due to these many emotional factors, but most probably as a result of suspected physical abuse, Eyore's tail will not remain attached, *regardless* of the other band member's attempts to tack this issue 'behind' Eyore. Because Eyore suffers with low self-worth, Eyore lives with a self-imposed ideology of gloom, seeing his role in the band as more of a burden to the other members rather than that of an equal, and chooses a self-persecution behavior and personality rather than accepting the other band members favorable reception of, and to him.

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[4] A classic book of the same name, written by Natalie Babbitt. In the book, the main character innocently discovers a family that lives within the secret of eternal life.

Gopher is an addicted personality, with only a short time in recovery to speak of. Gopher has now focused his addiction on work. As a workaholic, Gopher works almost a twenty-four hour day in the mines, inventing projects where there might not have been any previously. Although obviously classified as a "risk-taker," Gopher is co-dependant and is the only *homeless* member of the tribe. Gopher choose to travel the underground tunnels of the village, and, because of Gopher's somewhat delusional ideology, frequently attempts to blow up the underground area of 100 Acre Woods in order to create a milieu of tunnels beneath the village itself. Gopher chooses to live in the dynamite- blown tunnels as if they *were* his home. Although Kanga's biological child is neurologically and emotionally stable at first glance, after further assessment it becomes clear that Roo is mildly developmentally delayed. For example, when I asked Roo what he liked to do with his day, Roo told me that he spends his days practicing "very small jumps in the sand, falling down mouse-holes and climbing out of them" (Milne, *"Winnie the Pooh."* p98). Roo chooses to do this activity in loo of picking cloudberries with the rest of the band members. Roo is happy, though, and is *clearly* attached to Kanga, Roo's mother.

All of the members of this village live within the poverty range. The members make their homes either in holes of large trees, or in small, rather ramshackle wooden huts. Work availability is low to non-existent in the Wood, and there are no culturally relevant neighborhood schools available to the tribe. A young, but maturing counselor by the name of Christopher Robin offers counseling regularly to the members of the community. Primarily of Caucasian decent, Mr. Robin travels extensively and fearlessly throughout the 100-Acre Wood area, but chooses to make his home outside of the Wood area. He is well versed in the emotional and neurological concerns that are found within the village, and Mr. Robin, to his credit, seems to have an almost 'child-like' understanding and acceptance of these issues. Christopher has had an impressive training and hands-on internship experience in the arena of A.D.H.D./A.D.D., and has studied the effects of "the bottle" some three years previously himself. He works well with his clients, and his clients seem to like him, too. Christopher works closely with Owl, the educator of the Wood, who-o-o not only *instructs* the Pooh family, but is also lives above the main section of the community.

The belief system of the Pooh family seems to be anchored in respect, with an innate understanding of the "Golden Rule." Rules are simple, yet easy to hear and to understand when taught in a therapeutically 'storied' way, and operate not only for the individual, but also to benefit *the whole* of the community. Nights are scary, but with the help of someone who loves them enough to 'tell the scare away' in a story, the family feels safe. All members of the tribe try to obtain certain objectives, such as receiving honey, and no one is criticized for trying and not succeeding. Living happily within their means is stressed, and the value of a friend and/or family is seen as beyond a price tag.

Through the disabilities themselves, we, as *observers* of this society, can begin to understand that we are all different. By living within the 100-Acre Wood village, we learn that differences do not necessarily make us *who* we are, nor do those labels make us *any less acceptable* or lovable. In the 100-Acre Wood, acceptance of one another *non-judgmentally* is a foremost priority. The village stresses the fact that there is no one better or "worser" than another. Money is not considered important, nor is what anyone does for a living considered as his or her personal title. Rather, the goal is to be sure that the individual's work choice is something that should be done for a personal sense of achievement and to help out the development of the community in the whole. Lying and steeling are not acceptable in the Wood, so they are *simply* not done. The ideology that says, "no one is perfect, that everyone makes mistakes" is clearly understood and practiced in this community's story. In the 100-Acre Wood, *no* one intentionally hurts another. If hurting *does* happen, the "hurter" immediately and *meaningfully* attempts to make amends to the other.

Although the weather in the 100 Acre wood valley is generally good, working to retain a positive attitude towards life, when it *is* less than perfect, the members of this tribe welcome it with bright yellow rain coats, big brimmed hats, large 'splashable' boots, and great big smiles. There are no bad days in the Wood …there are just 'different' days. Though there might be *small* quarrels in the family- as all families quarrel from time-to-time – reconciliation is always the goal, and petty differences are soon forgotten. Life is reciprocal in nature, so when something is done for another, it is appreciative and remembered *lovingly* in accord – no matter *who* or *what* the person's differences might be.

The message of "Life is what you make of it" travels gently throughout 100-Acre Wood, and is coupled closely with the fact that we are all connected in this life together as one family of beings. Capitalism, although present, is not a ruling force, as this community believes that it is *mankind* who ultimately is this world's strength in the end. Compassion and acceptance cancels out meanness and judgementalism, and are seen as goals that we all should strive for in life. Because outsiders of 100 Acre Wood's Pooh family see this group more as parts of a fairy tale, it is generally understood that this ideal is not 100% obtainable. Rather, these are

goals that should be seen as ones that we should all reach for and learn from. *This*, then, is a way of life that we all would like to see embraced; the morals and tolerance that are practiced within this community of furry animals are values that we all should work towards for our family and children to acquire and ultimately accomplish.

Case Studies:

Along with several literary sources, I interviewed four individual people of various fields, genders, ethnicities, and ages in regards to this issue. I explained to *all* of the interviewees that I was attempting to analyze a children's story with the point being that not only are *cultures*, but societies, families, *as well* as various views and perspectives of tolerances "storied" into our lives by their very contents. *In addition*, I explained to my interviewees that my *second* motive was to bring forth and discuss the issue of multi-ethnic, multi-*differentiated* families that lived and played in the same story, and to make the story still recognizable in a way that we, as care-givers to the young, not only read, but *interpret* the stories, at least vicariously into our daily family lives. Through this report I tried to demonstrate that we tend to "adjust," or recycle these same stories over and over until they fit our personal and familial realities, making us *all* what Claude Levi-Strauss refers to as "rags-and-bones" people. Mr. Levi-Strauss suggests that "Myths [like long-lived stories] are like things in constant use, break and are fixed again, become lost and are found." As the poet William Butler Yeats states, [they eventually become] the foul rag and bones shop of the heart." Levi-Strauss continues on by telling us "each telling of a [story] draws upon these rags and bones, and each piece has its own precious life-history that it brings *into* the story" (Levi-Strauss, Forward.).

The troop of E.D. Hirsch, et al, states "We should indeed try to discriminate between history and myth; but true of false, the stories that we share provide us with our values, goals and traditions. The tales that we tell our children define what kind of people we shall be." They go on to say, "The term *myth* [which can be replaced with the word story,] *itself* implies community…all stories, even scientific theories and religious teachings, are myths" …and, as Cultures of families, we "emphasize the importance of shared myths in forming the national community and providing us with irreplaceable common points of reference. If we did not inherit myths, we would have to invent them; since we *have* inherited them, we should learn to use those we have inherited. Our traditional myths are no truer than false, wise and foolish, than those of other cultures. They are not inherently getter than those of China or India. But being ours, they are uniquely valuable to us" (Levi-Strauss, p27)… And the stories of Winnie the Pooh Bear are *verifiably* fine and wonderful examples of this!

The individual interviews that I conducted in regards to these matters back up these facts. Again, using the stories of "*Winnie the Pooh*" as reference points, I asked similar questions of Larry Nelson, D.S.H.S. Native American Unit Social Worker and single male; a married mother of four children, ages three years-old to fourteen years-old, who, for the basis of this report, prefers to remain anonymous; my own young son, Michael, aged eight years-old (who wishes to be *fully, and completely named* in this article), and my granddaughter MiCayla, who is "*seven-and-almost-one-half*" *years old*. It is interesting that all *four* of my interviewees – although individually and separately interviewed –pointed to the fact that stories are teachers and that they have certain *undeniable* social implications that they teach as a part of their functions. The children that I interviewed reported various social lessons that they were taught via the *characters* of the books, while the adults *both* suggested that they use the actual *words* of these stories, in general, to teach, to explain, or to "tie things together" for the children that they are involved with in their lives or that they interact with. As a result of their interviews, I suspect that this is somewhat true for *themselves*, as well!

Larry explained that he saw stories as the way that we use to "talk about [our] *own* lives," saying that we use stories to explain things, but we "really relate [the stories] to our [own] homes." He suggests that we use them as a way to "hand out critics and suggestions. Stories are magic!" says Larry. He goes on to say that [they] explain away negatives and offer credence to the positives. [They are] our way of making sense and *comparisons* within our lives. For example, Pooh is a good guy, and he likes *honey*, and *I* like Pooh, so I guess that I will like *honey*, too. I am a good guy then, like Pooh, too!" He explains that through the telling of stories we can create friendships and relationships and ultimately build our lives from out of their morals and tolerances."

"It is apparent from the interviews that we, as social beings, strive to be *like* the stories that we tell. The stories of our time(s) give us hope. Michael Jackson's story can be seen as the story of a poor, black child that pulled himself out of that social climate that he was born into, offering hope to the black child who lives in poverty, and the guy wins the 'Golden Goose:' i.e., the lotto, giving the poor child of *any* color or race, the idea that they, too, have the chance of becoming millionaires," Larry continued. "Stories become our '*rut-removers*,'" says Mr. Nelson.

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"and help to] create a relationship that is personal and one that [helps] break down walls that might otherwise seem insurmountable." He goes on to say that "We use stories as a way of "stereo-typing" certain people, and [the stories] can even create racisms. They can explain away various professions and the influence that they carry over us. An example," says Larry, " can be seen in connection with the story "*The Emperor's New Clothes,* " and with our [current] politicians," he explains. (Larry Nelson; 1999.)

The Pooh Bear stories "teaches kindness and consistency," says our mother of four. "Through the behavior of the Pooh characters, parents teach values, social acceptance, and *personal* acceptance, as well." This mother claims "stories help *me*, as a parent, to formulize and stabilize various parenting ideals," She explains that they "help my family to evolve into the family that she had hoped them to be." This 'Mom' explains "Through the actual *act* of reading stories to my children, I am creating a closeness and an understanding of certain ideals that I might have unintentionally glossed over, or might have simply skipped by the fact that these were ideals that are generally accepted and common themes to me, as an adult. The Pooh stories help to bring *out* these ideals," she said. "They help me to clarify the standards that are important in a way that does not threaten, scare, or implicate my children." She goes on to say that through the stories that she reads to her children, she "becomes just the story teller. Pooh Bear – or whomever the characters are within the story – are the lesson *teachers*." She reports that she commonly uses many of the same stories that she *herself* was told and loved; stories that were told to me by *my* parents!" (Mother of four)

The children that I interviewed reported that the story of "*Winnie the Pooh*" was "all about how important friends are." Michael used Rabbit to demonstrate his point. He explained that Rabbit teaches him about "forgiving and forgetting about it when a friend messes up." He told me that Tigger jumps on Rabbit's garden patch, and then Tigger goes and jumps on Rabbit … but Tigger doesn't *get* it when he is *hurting* Rabbit! He just doesn't understand what he has done!" explained Michael. He patiently told me that "This story tells me that everyone just has to stop and think about the *other* guy, just like Tigger needs to start thinking about other *people*, too; people can't just do what every they want to do all of the time!" (Michael RedHawk Ernsdorff)

The other characters in the story have a lot to teach children, too. MiCayla explains that Pooh Bear reminds us that it is important to "Think! Think! Think!" and that Piglet "told" her "you should go to your family if you are scared. When you are very, very small, like me, that's just where you should go," she explained. "And *poor Eyore!* Everyone cares about him *a lot*, but he is just too *sad* to know that. They care about him and try to include him in their fun, but they really have to *work hard* at making him not feel so *sad*!" MiCayla continues, "I guess that is what our job is, what friends are supposed to do… just like Eyore's friends don't give up on him because he acts different, or because he can't keep his tail on."
(MiCayla FourHorns).

The children told me that they learned that it "is not so important *where* you live or *what kind of house* you live in …its just important that you have *some* place to go *home* to. Period" (Michael RedHawk Ernsdorff). They agreed that the "important part to remember that "you have friends to count on!" Michael explained to me "just having someone to sit and read Pooh Bear stories …or *any* story, calms me down. When I am calm, I can listen better, and then I can get some good ideas on how to fix some of *my* problems, too![5]" He continued on by wisely stating "I actually learn the *best* from stories!" (Michael RedHawk Ernsdorff) "Stories teach us how it is important to talk to each other and how to be friends with someone, even if they are not just *exactly* like you. It is *easy* to learn about how to be a nice kid if you listen to Pooh Bear, cause Pooh Bear is a nice kid, too…you just have to remember about what Pooh would do if you get stuck!" Michael, in his child-like wisdom encapsulated this conversation by explaining that "Most kids know about Pooh Bear and Tigger, and so do most parents, too. That makes it easier to be a kid, cause then you can say, well, Tigger did this, or Pooh did that, and the other kids know just what you are talking about. That makes it a whole lot easier to remember to do the right thing …and not to be mean." "You're right, Michael. Pooh Bear is *never* mean," states MiCayla. "You just have to say to yourself, what would Pooh Bear do now? I think that if a kid watches Pooh for a long, long time, Pooh teaches them – just by listening to the story –about how to be nice and to do 'love'" (MiCayla FourHorns).

" In *FACT*, the 100 Acre Woods family is a lot like *our* family! Yes it *is*!" Michael exclaimed. "And everyone in this family is a lot like the *Poohs!* Andres is like Pooh Bear, and I like Pooh a lot, just like I like my brother! *I* am kinda like Tigger …at least, that's what my *mom* says! Jamie is like Rabbitt. She gets a little grouchy when I mess up sometimes, and I bug her by jumping around a lot. But we can all help her with that, just like the Pooh family helps Rabbit when Rabbit gets grumpy with Tigger! We all work together to solve problems that happen …just like Pooh's family work together on *their* problems! Families just *do* that… and that's probably why there are stories that do that, too! (Michael RedHawk Ernsdorff). The children concluded

[5] Michael is diagnosed as living with both Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Attention Deficit with hyper-activity.

that the stories that they hear are "like them" in the end, even in regards to ethnicities. Michael thinks that Pooh Bear must be a Native American "or something," he said. Micahel explains this is "well, cause, well, I guess I really don't *know* why I think that. Its *probably* because those guys think and act like me and MiCayla, and stuff. And you are like Kanga, because you are the Mom!" (Michael RedHawk Ernsdorff)

In essence, their reporting tells the whole story. Although this is a story about cultures and their derivatives, the people that I interviewed could very well been *anyone* of the characters in the Pooh Bear story. This story, like the other favorites stories that we tell, is the telling of a culture's values, its morals, it's tolerances, and its goals for the citizens that inhabit their communities. It is about teaching tolerance for its members from within a cultural perspective. Through this analysis of *"Winnie the Pooh,"* we can see that although families might derive out of different *cultures*, it is the *way* that we *treat* each other that is important. Stories are the ties that bind us together universally, for together we are just that …a culture of people who are familied[6] together through recognizable and understood traditions, values, and ideas, each that respond *with tolerance* to our individual differences. We are the Pooh Bear families that meet together on the bridge at the edge of the 100-Acre Wood. Like storybook characters, we share a cultural story, one that looks first for our *similarities* rather than for our differences. Ultimately, the tie that binds us together -- young and old, ethnicity-to-ethnicity, the challenged and the un-challenged of life— *we are* the essence of our stories. They are what teaches our young and what reminds the old. They tell the world who we are, and write the tale to the world of who we are *together*. Although our renditions might differ, and our interpretations might be altered via our personal experiences, stories are the threads that weave the quilt of memories for us to hand down the familial-softened histories to the next generation of children.

Stories, such as *"Winnie the Pooh"* are *tools* that we use within our families to teach our children social boundaries, values and goals. These are the ways that we, as human beings, attempt to "story" our families and our children into life and cultures. These stories embrace our moral goals and Gods, establish our beliefs into families, and help guide us into an acceptance of certain variability's that we are faced with in our lives. Stories are *meant* to "be." They are for *all* of us to learn from each time that they are told. A.A. Milne teaches that names, which can designate status, rank, culture, and ethnicity in some cases, are just that. Names. That which we live *under*, but does not necessarily speak to *who* we are as people. From this we can understand it is not *who* we are that should be considered important, but rather *how* we are that is important. When Pooh Bear asks, "What does 'under the name' mean?" Milne explains that it means, "[we have] a name over the door in gold letters and lived under it." We *all* live "under a name," but in reality, we are doing just that, living *under* a name. We are so *much more* than just a name. Before our names, we are members of the same human family, and we are tied together in the *human* story. Through stories such as Pooh Bear's, we are both taught and *reminded* of our own, inter-related *connectivness in humanity*.

Milne's stories even teach such things as cause and effect, and show the effects of this concept within the family, as well! When Pooh falls out of the tree as a result of his *un*thinking about his pursuit for honey, Milne quotes Pooh as saying, in an explanation of his 'tree-falling,' that it "all comes from liking honey so much. Oh help!" (Milne, *"Winnie the Pooh."* p9). How many of *us* can relate to being in this 'spot' before? The place where we had wanted something *so badly* that we did not take the time to consider the best approach for getting what we want, nor did we take the time to consider what the *ramifications* might be as a result of this 'wanting?'

We, both as a society of adults, and as a society of children and their families, learn *and teach* others through the examples that we write about in the stories to our young. *Because* of our stories, we are 'familized'[7] into our beliefs and our cultures. Because we *believe* in our stories, we remember our *cultures*, for they are *for* remembering. As Pooh tells us, [stories] remember, only [humans] do not remember very well, so that's why [we] like having [them] told to [us] again. Because it is a *real* story, not just a remembering" (Milne, *"The World of Pooh."* p20). *We* are, then, the living imitation of our own best-loved fairy tales, and, at least for a *while* in our lives we live *in* them. Says Monica McGoldrick "Belief systems provide a meaningful orientation for understanding one another, and approaching new challenges. They are expressed in the narratives we construct together, guiding our expectations and actions" (McGoldrick, p64). J.B. Peterson in his book *"Maps of Meaning,"* says "I came over the course of a decade and a half to understand the meanings of many things that had been entirely hidden from me –things that I had cast away, stupidly, as of little worth. I came to realize that ideologies had a narrative structure – that they were stories, in a word – and that the emotional stability of

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[6] A group of people who are bond together, whether they are related or not, to form a family of people; a unit of togetherness and caring.

[7] Formed into a family unit. We develop a family shape.

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individuals depended upon the *integrity* of their stories …I understood, finally, that the world that stories describe is not the *objective* world, but the world of *value* – and that it is in this world that we live, first and foremost" (Peterson, p2).

So you see. The story of Pooh Bear remains to be one of the stories of our families, of our *cultures.* Maybe –but *just* maybe – the stories that we teach our children with really *aren't* so "stuffed with fluff" after all! Which one of us has not wished on the first star of the evening? Which one of us has not fully *believed* in the *power* of a shooting star at one time or another? And which one of us hasn't, in turn, taught our *children* to wish on a star? Through our stories, like the example that Milne offers us in *"Winnie the Pooh,"* we are not just keeping our family cultures and traditions alive, we are *encouraging them into the hopes and dreams of the next generations* as well. They are the gifts that we offer our families to grow into. Stories, such as *"Winnie the Pooh,"* are the breeders of tolerance, the meaning of our cultures that we give to the future generations of Poohs!

A Community that Dreams are Made From.

Introduction:

All of us have our own, individualistic descriptions of our "Dream House;" our ideal community. As adults, we base the fulfillment – or not – of these "Fairy Tale" communities on such thing as our ethnicity, our education, our social position, and our financial well-being. With the help of such tools as Census Reports and various information that is gleaned from local Real-Estate agencies, we can form an opinion of whether the area that we are looking at will meet the vision that our dreams have already constructed for us. But, how did we *initially* form these images of these "fairy tale' communities?

How is it that we seem to know the *kind* of community that we are looking for long before any realistic and rational analysis is made with the tools that are granted adults in this era? Certain subliminal messages have been etched upon our unconscious minds and have directed us towards ideals since we were children, illuminating a fairy tale quality upon various homes and neighborhood personalities even before we set foot in them ourselves. I conjecture that our visions of these ideals have been constructed and nurtured into our thought through the stories, fables, and legends that we have been told throughout our youth. These stories have set standards of expectations that influence our work choices, our choice of mates, even our family ideals, morals, and values. They help us to establish orderly communities through representations of various rules of conduct, and they celebrate various status levels and living conditions as bo0th well and accepted ways of living.

Stories are rooted deep in our histories, and both magnify the present that has been built with illus ional characters, and still will hold a prism to our future with their tales. Though not as overt as what morals are in a story, the construction of various societies have been colored onto the sketchpads of our memories, offering conceptions that include the exceptional kinds of community living that we anticipate. They offer descriptions of the average-but-acceptable living styles, all the way to the tolerable and the intolerable living standards that can be found within communities. From childhood we are offered visions of the handsome and well-educated prince and princess that live their lives in splendid castles that overlook their humble townships... as well as the homes made of white stucco or brick that are encased by white picket fences meant to protect the beautiful and well-read maidens that live within them. We are told stories about the poor fisherman and his wife who scurries to make ends meet, ultimately living isolated lives from the rest of the community. They spend their "story" in small drafty little homes with roofs that are topped with straw. We are storied to dread the life of the city apartments with their fiendish occupants. We have been storied to believe that degenerates, such as the hungry orphan boy- still skulk amongst the shadows, waiting for the right moment to snatch our purses, grab our children and run away with them, offering only lame excuses such as they wanted to buy themselves some food.

To further demonstrate the construction of our fairy tale neighborhoods, I will once again refer to the stories of A.A. Milne's *"Winnie the Pooh and the Hundres Acre Woods."* In an attempt to explain this concept, I will act as your guide during your "House of Dreams" tour. I will offer an analysis and comparison of four very different, yet somehow vaguely familiar and enjoyably contrived neighborhoods and their occupants, all whom we have come to love, enjoy, and accept from those illusively veiled corners of our memories. Through these, then, I will give you, the reader, a glimpse of your own created and personally conditioned fairy tale communities that you were raised in that have come to be the beckoning call to the neighborhoods of your adult, fairy tale communities-of-choice.

Now, I welcome you to the 100-Acre Woods,
... The home of Winnie the Pooh, and Tigger, too!!

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A Community that Dreams are Made of!

At *first* glance, we could assume that this quaint little village of the 100-Acre Wood is one of *total* equality, one that does not stratify its occupants into classes or into neighborhoods of ethnic groups or categories. We think of the *quaintness* of the characters, and hear the humming of the honeybees, while admiring the neat little garden of vegetables that grow *large* under the tender loving care of Rabbit. We see the bubbling stream that flows *happily* at the edge of the town, and have a sudden urge to slowly amble over the little bridge that straddles it. Sitting on the local town bench, dreamily watching this content little town, the resident's easy appearing relationships seems to encapsulate the meaning of harmony, and one wonders if there ever is an *unfair moment* that has been visited upon this village of Winnie the Pooh and family. Unfortunately, being caught up in the rapture of this little hamlet, we tend to *tune out* the living conditions that hides under this outwardly relaxed atmosphere, and sadly, we discover the living reality of Winnie the Pooh, and Tigger, too.

Upon closer inspection, we can begin to see that this "one-ness" that we thought we had perceived is *really* not the case at all. Once we have shaken off the storybook illusion, we begin to see a clear caste or status system that operates within this enchanted domain after all. We begin to see clearly laid out neighborhoods that sing with a variability of living conditions, conditions that flavors the 100-Acre Wood with the tastes and feel of humanity. As we look, we notice that, like a lot towns, there is a predominant population that inherits the actual main township itself, one that speaks generally from out of the state of affairs that can be found within the town personalities themselves. This area, then, is where we will visit *first* ... the actual *down town* district of the 100-Acre Woods.

The village of 100-Acre Woods is a town that has been hard-hit with recession. This has caused the *majority* of its population to move out of its perimeters from necessity. One can suspect that these folks were *probably* lured by the image of employment in other, more *industrialized* areas that call from *outside* of this slowly aging town. There does *not* seem to be many employment opportunities that call for in-town employment within 'the hood,' and the primary form of employment seems to be somewhat limited to vegetable farming. Even thought the farm itself seems to be more-or-less productive, there is a rather narrow window of opportunity for employment, calling for the rest of the 'hoods' population to beg for work on the farm, or choose to be reduced to either hunting for honey among the local Honey Bee Tribe, or, sadly, to do nothing at all. Many-a-day, one can view a number of this village's inhabitants wandering aimlessly down the paths and the trails that make up the village of the 100-Acre Wood, stopping only long enough in their wandering to pick cloud-berries, or to help the local donkey put back on his tail.

The town *itself*, though, is a lesson in diversity. The population apparently suffers an almost complete lack of education. There seems to be some goalless-ness, and this trait seems to radiate through many of the village citizens. The actual town seems to be primarily recognized by a particular group of local members by the names of Winnie the Pooh, Piglet, Rabbit, Tigger and Eyore. Representatives of the general population of this neighborhood, they are an interesting and diverse mix with almost animalistic-like qualities. Even though this neighborhood is speckled with various disabilities that are often connected with the working class poor, it still seems to be graced with a sense of optimism that has survived in the face of economic depression and oppression. Although the living conditions are comparable to those neighborhoods that are found in the working-class sectors of many societies, this neighborhood still seems to encourage the tenderness and charms of a child.

On the far edge of the hood, towards the edge of the Wood district itself dwells a quaint, but sparsely populated area that speaks of idealic comfort. It is dappled with the essence of the esthetically pleasing and family orientated atmosphere that gently encompasses rural living. Here we can find the home of Kanga and Roo. The homes of this area are doll-like in quality, and while situated on large parcels of land, they are reminders of your typical stick-frame homes of the middle to late '50's era. The homes are well groomed with small flowerbeds gracing their walkways, and the amenities that the town offers is within easy walking distance from this neighborhood. The aura of cloud-berries permeates the air, and the over-all ambience of this neighborhood is one of the pleasantly stable, and comfortably educated middle classed family.

The population that inhabits this community is basically made up of home businesses, and using Ms. Kanga as an example, the families that hop around this area appear to be well read, and see education as a priority for their young. Although schools are not extremely accessible to this neighborhood, the majority of the families have elected to home-school their young, so this does not seem to effect the over-all nature of the community at large. Ms. Kanga's home leads us to believe that appearance is important. She often cites the homeowner's covenants regarding toys and belongings that are left out as a rule to both little Roo and us, the visitors that come to call on her in her neighborhood.

The area does not boast of diversity itself, but it is safe enough neighborhood to leave the windows and the doors open, *even* while the occupants of this community are not at home. With just a short walk down the path, the many cultures of the hood are easily attainable to Ms. Kanga and her community, however. While the community itself is small, there is still a large and lingering air of upper-mobility that jumps out at the visitors to this quaint, self-made community. The members of this neighborhood speak of gentle social sophistication, and seem to place

cleanliness and family ethics high upon their lists of community and familial expectations. While next door in the 'hood,' where cleanliness is somewhat amiss, it would be a rare day that residents such as Ms. Kanga would be seen in anything less than a clean, sparkling white apron, and the children of the neighborhood were not being cajoled into a bath of warm, milky white suds in which to clean up in.

This neighborhood speaks with family standards, respectability and a quietly educated culture of stability. It is close to the diversity of the town, yet prides itself on its safety. Ms. Kanga lays down the book that she is reading to little Roo, and while she rocks Roo in her chair she explains that their homes spell respectability. She tells us that the homes in their area are much safer than the homes in the 100 Acre Woods arena, and informs us that it is not unheard of in town to have a large bouncing Tigger-character, as well as round, developmentally delayed Pooh Bears come pouncing into your home unannounced and uninvited. Apparently these 'visitors' come in search of food, and, in particular, in search of the much-prized commodity of honey …especially if it is known that there is honey in pots.

On the upper side of 100-Acre Wood lies the neighborhood of the college-educated population. This is the area that one can view the home of Monsieur Owl, the resident professor in the 100-Acre Wood region. On first glance, one can see easily that these are the homes that speak of higher levels of educational attainment, and the difference is easily ascertained in comparison to the aforementioned neighborhoods of either Winnie the Pooh, or even of Ms. Kanga and Roo. Tucked in the branches in a secured and protected local environment, these small, mostly singly inhabited homes have been built with the utmost integrity and creativity. Thought the home of Monsieur Owl is close to the town itself, it is not as easily accessible to the town as Ms. Kanga's neighborhood is. This seems to be by a reason of design, as the area seems to be colonized by individuals who are constantly on 'the fly,' for the better portion of the evening, and thus they require a more remote area in which to aspire in during the day times.

Comfortably livable, it is not *un*common to find the insides of these little cottages with their walls covered with literature. This community seems to erupt with on-going philosophically impromptu gatherings that are held spontaneously at local residents firesides. Although the area's population is small in number, it seems to readily welcome populations of all kinds and colors to its doors. Welcoming a variety of intellectually inspired and motivated characters, this area seems to encompass the diversity of the never-before educated to its midst, all the entirely educationally competent to its scholarly and distinct community of scholars.

As is not uncommon in any town, the 100-Acre Wood is not exclusive of its underprivileged and derelict populations, either. This village, too, has a small and gloomy area that could be considered its 'undergrounds.' Accessible only through the dark, dirty tunnels of the oppressed, this area seems to invite a population of gopher-like residents. Though its population is small, this neighborhood seems to endourage homelessness buy virtue of its dank and muddy appearances. Unemployment is more of a welcomed way of life here, and, unfortunately, addictions abound amongst its occupants. The neighborhood itself is rooted in isolationism, that sadly can only speak to the down-trodden and explosive personalities, where blowing up seems to dominate the group that lives within it's gloom. Here, then is the group of citizens that are the dynamite that blows up the usual route into the dens of human achievements.

There is one more neighborhood that needs to be addressed within the belly of this paper. This is the more affluent and financially entrenched neighborhood that speaks to such populates as Christopher Robin and his parents. Although it is not actually within the boundaries of the 100 Acre Wood, with many of the homes sitting just outside of the village borders – a fact that the residents of this community are quick to point out – the citizens of this community regularly visit the 100 Acre village to bask in its uniqueness. Unlike the previous neighborhoods, this community flaunts a life-style that supports the financially affluent and socially aware. The homes in the area supports an aura of urbane wealth, with mostly two story, well built brick-trimmed wood homes. The intricately landscaped pathways speak well to its inhabitant's prosperity and achievements, reflecting the strong work ethics that abounds in this neighborhood. The population that lives within this community is very well educated and boasts of all two parented homes where the average number of children is but one child in the family. The children are graced with large portions of toys and material possessions, ultimately sharing their bedrooms with no one.

Because its inhabitants are well educated, it values diversity. While the community itself is not diversified, it encourages its residents, including children like Christopher Robin, to donate time in the area of the 'hood.' They encourage their young to being both social services and education to that population that is not as lucky as they recognize themselves to be. Like Christopher Robin, the majority of the children that live in this area dress with class and respectability, in clothing that represents their social standing and wealth. It would be unusual to see Christopher in anything less than clean, short pants and crisply ironed shirts. As is to be expected, education is a high priority, too, in this neighborhood. Expectations are high for the children of this area, and the parents of the children encourage their young people to travel often into the hood with the hopes that they learn the value of their own social status, yet learn to savor the tastes of the cultures that flourish within the main streets of 100 Acre Wood. The one concern that is expressed loudly to these children is that, even though they might well encourage them to travel into the town of the 100-Acre Wood, they full well expect that all of their children will remember to be back in their own neighborhood before nightfall for their own safety.

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Taking a large, over-all glance at the area that is the 100 Acre Wood –excluding, at their request, the neighborhood of Christopher Robin's – we can see that this is an area than is humbled by poverty and unemployment. There seems to be a lack of formal education systems in the Wood and its surrounding areas, leaving these communities to rely on educators that are 'gifted' by the more affluent neighborhoods that surround it. The largest portion of the population seems to be quite culturally and esthetically diversified. In addition, there seems to be a lack of industrial employment opportunities in the area, and, as a result, there is not a significant growth that is seems within the town's panoramic future. . or in the population of the Wood itself.

Although the area has been devastated by unemployment, and, in quite a few cases, poverty as well, the personalities that remain seems to have retained a sense of optimism that welcomes the child in us all to visit them often. The area of the 100 Acre Wood seems to have almost naively retained an almost fairy tale ambience about it, and the community is one that can be used to develop the carting in almost anyone that enters into it.

This is but one of the stories that we have been encourages and educated by during our youths. As you can see, it prescribes a tone of expectation that is subtly directed at the dreams for our future communities and homes. For example, while Ms. Kanga's home is set apart from the general township milieu, it is representative of the refinement and genteel qualities that we all admire while retaining accessibility to the town itself for the companionship and shopping comforts that the town epitomizes. The environmental position of her neighborhood seems to call out a nurturing ambience that seems to speak of rural areas to us, and her education is one of more-or-less average, and her presence is one that is socially cultured much like a resident that we might expect to view in our own home towns. The neighborhood that calls to the educated seems to include a sense of individual Bohemianism, citizens that seem to enjoy operating their lives within the upper edges, yet somewhat on the outer limbs of society itself. Philosophical debates seem to spontaneously emerge through the trees, and safety is not a huge concern for the residents or visitors of this community.

As we have seen in our own communities, as well as in this story, too, the wealthy, more affluent and more upperwardly goal directed families have chosen homes that are out of the realms of the actual township, choosing to congregate amongst themselves more than with the other communities. They hover close enough to sample the diversity of the area, and, by supplying social services to the other neighborhoods; they are able to talk philanthropy and good will to all they meet. They appear to have separated their neighborhoods by class and ethnicity, with the dominant culture taking precedence, keeping the less well off distanced by the confines of community boundaries.

So you see. The stories that we teach our youngsters really do prescribe a certain mentality and description of social living arrangements for our communities. We begin to create an image of desirability within the earliest years of childhood. Our child perceptions of society are carefully interwoven into the text and moral fibers of the tales that we have been told, with the illusion of acceptability carefully embroidered onto our ideas of whole livability and community.

The castles on the hill, the stuccoed cottages with their white picket fences, the straw roofed bungalows of the poor, and the dark and dank apartments of the city-dwelling deviants are the communal under-pinning that we have chosen to entertain our children with are the same dreams of fairy tale homes that we whisper of in our adult years. IT is through these fables, like "Winnie the Pooh and the 100 Acre Wood," that we not only design the moral configurations of our lives, but through them, we begin to weave the communities of our futures. These ideals traipse through our unconsciousness, trailing a general attitude and a pastel-painted society. Through the fairy tales of our youth, our future is conditioned into a softly spoken idealism that eventually shapes the notions of acceptability of the carious conditions of our dream communities.

So consider well the stories that we repeat to our young, my friends. What you tell them today from out of the stories that made your histories may well be those that pave the children's images and decisions for their dream communities as well. Recognize the strength of the child's fable. For it could be their home…and the community that they will grow old in!

Until Later,

Story On

My Pooh Friends!

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INTERVIEWEES:

Larry Nelson, Social Worker; D.S.H.S.: Indian Unit Seattle Wa.

Tracy Lidstrom, Mother and Friend.

MiCayla FourHorns. Seven-Year-old Pooh Bear 'Expert.'

Michael Ernsdorff. Eight Year old Philosopher and Literary Critic.

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